

U Choose to Know

Connecting With Youth Who Are LGBTQ+



Gender and Sexuality Alliances or Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) have been [around since the 1980s](#) providing youth who identify as LGBTQ+ and their allies a safe space to support and connect with one another. However, they have evolved to include so much more. Students involved in GSAs now [tackle issues related to race, gender, and educational justice](#).

GSAs are formed and run by students with a teacher or staff member as the club advisor. Have you ever thought about what a GSA could do for your school? Do you know a group of students that could use this type of network? Or, have your students dubbed you the “go to” person for all things LGBTQ+? If so, you may be just the right person to support and motivate students to form a GSA.

Here’s a success story about a local Gay-Straight Alliance in Baltimore:

In 2017, [Roland Park Elementary/Middle School’s GSA club received an award](#) at the 2017 GLSEN Respect Awards. This award honored the students for their work advocating for LGBTQ+ rights in their school. The student-run GSA worked to create a more inclusive and accepting environment for all genders within their classrooms and community. The organization created a project that allowed youth to remain anonymous when asking questions and voicing concerns related to gender and sexuality. In the community, the GSA spoke up at a school board meeting to voice their concerns about the need for clearer policies and guidance around LGBTQ+ issues.

Examples like this demonstrate the importance of having GSAs in middle and high schools. In addition to creating safe spaces for LGBTQ+ alliances, students are also developing project planning skills, public speaking skills, and the confidence to fight for issues that are important to them. We can learn so much from one another and build on our uniqueness to create a more accepting and just environment for all. I hope the Roland Park GSA inspires you to get involved with supporting LGBTQ+ students and alliances outside of your classroom in whatever way you can.

The GSA Network has put together [10 steps for creating a GSA at your school](#). However, as a health educator who may wear so many different hats, it may not be feasible for you to commit that kind of time to starting a new club. Here are 3 additional ways to support LGBTQ+ students:

1. Motivate all students to practice understanding the community and challenges that LGBTQ+ students face. Encourage them to be brave enough to practice empathy and to stand up to the mistreatment of non-binary students.

2. Ensure that your classroom is a safe space for students who identify as LGBTQ+ to be themselves. Emphasize to these students that you are a resource for them and are willing to help connect them to other resources.

3. Encourage students who identify as LGBTQ+ to be themselves in the face of adversity; hiding their true selves doesn’t win against hate and discrimination.

As much as we want to support students who identify as LGBTQ+, we cannot do it alone. We have included some resources that are youth-friendly and LGBTQ+ affirming, accepting, friendly, and accessible on the next page.

LGBTQ+ Youth Friendly Services Resource Guide

<p><u>The Center for Black Equity-Baltimore</u> 2530 N. Charles Street, 3rd floor Baltimore, MD 21218 (443) 218-2478</p>	<p>The Center for Black Equity-Baltimore provides a safe space where all Black LGBTQ people can feel supported and be themselves. The organization provides community workshops, events, and counseling services.</p>
<p><u>The Pride Center of Maryland</u> 2530 N. Charles Street, 3rd Floor Baltimore, MD 21218 (410) 777-8145</p>	<p>The Pride Center of Maryland creates spaces for LGBTQ+ to unite and be part of a safe and empowered community. The center offers youth meet-ups, game nights, art groups, after-school study sessions, and so much more! They also offer free HIV testing, free and private case management for employment, health care, mental health, housing, and education, as well as a variety of community services.</p>
<p><u>Youth Empowered Society</u> (Yes Drop-In Center) 2315 N. Charles Street, 1st Floor Baltimore, MD 21218 (410) 235-7744</p>	<p>The YES Drop-In Center is a place for youth, with a focus on homeless youth, to go and get their basic needs met. They provide services to help youth find shelter and housing. The center also has a LGBTQ+ peer support group.</p>
<p><u>Baltimore Police Department</u> <u>LGBTQ Liaison Officer</u> Sergeant Kevin Baily Email: kevin.bailey@baltimorepolice.org Phone: 443-683-1581</p>	<p>The Baltimore City Police Department LGBTQ liaison works with youth in the community to address violence and hate crimes against people who identify as LGBTQ+. If you are in need of advice or assistance, this may be a great place to start.</p>
<p><u>Chase Brexton Health Services</u> 1111 N. Charles Street Baltimore, MD 21201 (410) 837-2050</p>	<p>Chase Brexton provides a variety of health services which includes: therapy, primary care, counseling/support groups, substance use, dental care, and HIV/STI testing. Services are specifically inclusive for youth who identify as LGBTQ+. They accept most insurance plans and offer assistance for the uninsured.</p>
<p><u>U Choose</u>, a project of the Baltimore City Health Department</p>	<p>Refer students and parents to the U Choose website where they can find information on birth control methods, STIs and testing, relationships, and other resources.</p>
<p><u>Y2 Connect</u></p>	<p>Y2 connect is a website that links youth to a variety of resources, contacts, and programs. Some of the areas include: healthcare, job readiness, counseling, life-skills training, food assistance, clothing, and after-school programs. There are many different resources to look over and choose from.</p>



For more information,
visit: UChooseBaltimore.org